

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

JERMAINE LOCKHART,

Plaintiff,

v.

KYLE TRITT,

Defendant.

Case No. 19-CV-1676-JPS

ORDER

Plaintiff Jermaine Lockhart, who is incarcerated at Waupun Correctional Institution, proceeds in this matter *pro se*. He filed a complaint alleging that Defendant violated his constitutional rights. (Docket #1). This matter comes before the court on Plaintiff's motion to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*). (Docket #2). Plaintiff has been assessed and has paid an initial partial filing fee of \$1.54. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b).

The court shall screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.

Id. § 1915A(b).

A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Hutchinson ex rel. Baker v. Spink*, 126 F.3d 895, 900 (7th Cir. 1997). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where

it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. “Malicious,” although sometimes treated as a synonym for “frivolous,” “is more usefully construed as intended to harass.” *Lindell v. McCallum*, 352 F.3d 1107, 1109–10 (7th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted).

To state a cognizable claim under the federal notice pleading system, the plaintiff is required to provide a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that [he] is entitled to relief[.]” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). It is not necessary for the plaintiff to plead specific facts and his statement need only “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, a complaint that offers mere “labels and conclusions” or a “formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). To state a claim, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, “that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). The complaint’s allegations “must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citation omitted).

In considering whether a complaint states a claim, courts should follow the principles set forth in *Twombly* by first, “identifying pleadings that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679. Legal conclusions must be supported by factual allegations. *Id.* If there are well-pleaded factual

allegations, the court must, second, “assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.” *Id.*

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: 1) he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and 2) the deprivation was visited upon him by a person or persons acting under color of state law. *Buchanan-Moore v. Cty. of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009) (citing *Kramer v. Vill. of N. Fond du Lac*, 384 F.3d 856, 861 (7th Cir. 2004)); *see also Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). The court is obliged to give the plaintiff’s *pro se* allegations, “however inartfully pleaded,” a liberal construction. *See Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Plaintiff alleges that Defendant failed to provide him socks for a few months, which led to Plaintiff developing athlete’s foot. (Docket #1 at 2–3). These allegations invoke Plaintiff’s Eighth Amendment right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. In particular, prisoners have a right to certain necessities of life, such as “clothing, sanitation, and hygienic materials.” *Myers v. Ind. Dep’t of Corr.*, 655 F. App’x 500, 503 (7th Cir. 2016). But a prisoner’s rights are only violated when prison conditions fall below ““the minimal civilized measure of life’s necessities.”” *Gillis v. Litscher*, 468 F.3d 488, 491 (7th Cir. 2006) (quoting *Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 347 (1981)).

While Plaintiff’s experience may have been unpleasant, it is not anywhere near severe enough to implicate constitutional concerns. Had Plaintiff lost a toe to frostbite, for instance, the Court’s conclusion would be different, but many people experience athlete’s foot with a limited amount of discomfort and treat it themselves with over-the-counter medication. At

best, Defendant was negligent in providing Plaintiff with socks, but negligence is not enough to violate the Constitution. *Townsend v. Cooper*, 759 F.3d 678, 687 (7th Cir. 2014). The Court finds that Plaintiff has failed to state a viable claim for relief, and will therefore dismiss this action with prejudice.

Accordingly,

IT IS ORDERED that Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*) (Docket #2) be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this action be and the same is hereby **DISMISSED with prejudice** pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b)(1) for failure to state a claim;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of Court document that Plaintiff has incurred a "strike" under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g);

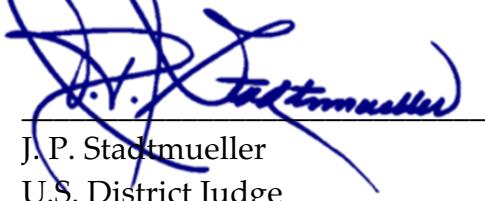
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the agency having custody of Plaintiff shall collect from his institution trust account the balance of the filing fee, \$348.46, by collecting monthly payments from Plaintiff's prison trust account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month's income credited to Plaintiff's trust account and forwarding payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action. If Plaintiff is transferred to another institution, county, state, or federal, the transferring institution shall forward a copy of this Order along with Plaintiff's remaining balance to the receiving institution; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that a copy of this order be sent to the officer in charge of the agency where Plaintiff is confined.

The Clerk of the Court is directed to enter judgment accordingly.

Dated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this 20th day of December, 2019.

BY THE COURT:



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.P. Stadtmueller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "J.P." on the left and "Stadtmueller" on the right, separated by a small dot.

J.P. Stadtmueller
U.S. District Judge